

## SAMPSON AND DELIGHTFUL THOUGHTS

[BAS advisor Dr. Wallace Sampson, M.D., spoke to our March meeting in the South Bay. His topic was whether positive thinking has any medical effect on cancer. Dr. Sampson is an oncologist and teaches at Stanford medical school, besides his private practice.]

Dr. Sampson's wide range of interests includes medical research, but not exactly in a direct way. Early in his career he worked as a researcher, but he decided that he didn't have what it took; he even went so far as to say that he is not a scientist. Then he began to show us that if he isn't a scientist few of those in the medical community using the title deserve it. After he left the field of active research, he became interested in the work of others. He pours over papers and systematically shows how unscientific many of them are. If that doesn't represent good scientific ability one is at a loss for how one should classify Dr. Sampson.

As an oncologist, Wally must confront the popular claims of the booksellers. His patients bring their books and articles to his office, so read them he must. One cannot overlook the possibility that maybe there could be something of value for his patients, and he must always be ready to respond. What he discovered is discouraging for its shallowness.

A good scientist, upon observation of some unusual phenomenon, looks first to isolate the variables. Then he or she tries to replicate the finding and begins to look for a theory to explain why the event is happening. If one does not follow this general procedure one may not properly be called a scientist. Wally's ability as an investigator consists of two parts, both of them preeminent scientific essentials: (1) he is able to cut to the core of the problem and throw a flood of light on the confusion, and (2) he is masterful in his ability to simplify and explicate the problem. It is as important to discover the flaws in a proposition as to devise it in the first place.

A capable researcher asks hard questions and will not rest until they are answered. Evidently, many of the researchers aren't even asking the simple or obvious questions. A competent researcher invites criticism and collaborates with others in the field, sharing ideas and data. Almost none of this has happened in the studies about meditation, positive thinking, etc., as they may

affect cancer. Neologisms are a substitute for sound theory, and we hear things like the "magnetic resonance" of the body being "out of balance."

## IMMUNE RESPONSE?

Dr. Sampson started with a question: What brain function set up by meditation could cause the immune system to effectively attack a malignant cell?

There are as many as a thousand different kinds of cells in the body (muscle, corneal, blood, bone, etc.). Purveyors of positive thinking postulate that somehow the immune system can be "boosted" so it can better combat disease. That may sound plausible to the average person, but to one who has -- or should have -- a dependable knowledge of physiology there are some serious problems to overcome, especially as the question relates to malignancy. The first problem is the very notion of "boosting" the immune system: an increased immunologic response is more often HARMFUL. Toying with the immune system can have disastrous effects. For example, auto-immune conditions are those in which the system is "boosted" to the point that it attacks everything, including the tissue of one's own body.

The second problem is that cancerous tissue is NOT foreign tissue. A cancerous cell is one of our own cells gone haywire. The idea that our immune system could be able to conduct a selective siege on its own tissues because of some positive thinking requires some powerful explanation. How could this degree of SPECIFIC instruction be sorted and carried out from the incipient thought during meditation to the immunological response? What kind of mechanism could possibly work this way? This is where research should be concentrated if those who allege such fantastic results are to have any credibility with the medical community.

Instead of sound medical research and penetrating peer review, the proponents take the easy -- and profitable -- way out: publish directly to the public. A medically ignorant and hopeful public doesn't offer the proper ground base for rigorous, skeptical analyses.

Dr. Sampson explained how the immune system works against pathogenic invasion. An invading foreign body has antigens on the surface of its molecules that form a unique pattern. The host body's immune system sends out coded identifiers (antibodies) to see if the substance is foreign by a lock-in-key matching mechanism of the antigen pattern. If there is a match, antibodies attack and destroy the alien substance. One's own tissues are not coded for attack except in rare cases of auto-immune disorders like multiple sclerosis and lupus -- a case of the immune system run amok.

## WHERE DID IT START?

Wally wanted to know where the idea of positive-thinking-cures-

cancer started. He dug out the earliest papers and found that they were almost all done by psychologists. PSYCHOLOGISTS? What does a Ph.D. psychologist know about anatomy and immunology? They are simply not qualified. Those early papers were taken uncritically and a whole industry was built on their flimsy backs.

The most notable author in the genesis of the idea is psychologist Lawrence LeShan, who identified personality traits that he claimed would lead to cancer. Depression, at base, was the bogeyman according to him. The blockbuster book that really went around the popular appearance circuit was Norman Cousins's "Anatomy of an Illness" in which he asserted that he had literally laughed himself from the scythe's sweep of the Grim Reaper. The proof? He was alive. He gave no credit -- or presumably thanks -- to his surgery and post-op therapy. He said he had had a fatal disease, not grasping the fact that a disease is fatal only if one dies.

Dr. Stuart Simenton, one of the first M.D.s to get into the water with his book "Getting Well Again" stretched this kind of thinking into a nice scientific-sounding linear sequence by the following progression (read "=>" as "stimulates"):

Psychological stress => depression and despair => limbic system => hypothalamus => pituitary gland => endocrine system => immune system => abnormal cell production => CANCER.

The first two steps might be reasonable, but it is all pure supposition after that. Mainstream M.D.s cringe at every page. Simenton does not give so much as a hint about a mechanism to make this ad hoc series work, and his treatise is suffused with Christian Science ideas.

Dr. Sampson raised some very simple counterexamples that should serve to reduce Simenton's scheme to rubbish: AIDS patients, holocaust survivors, WWII POWs, death-row inmates, and the clinically depressed. In each of these cases the subjects were clearly under severe emotional and psychological stress and suffered deep depression and despair. In each of these cases the incidence of cancer was well BELOW average.

The single most popular book -- it was the number-one best-seller for over a year -- is Dr. Bernie Siegel's "Love, Medicine & Miracles". Siegel, a practicing M.D., made several million dollars from the book and, unfortunately, may have turned hundreds or thousands of cancer victims away from scientifically demonstrated life-saving therapies.

This attitude-can-cause-disease folderol is right up the New Age alley. The movement quickly co-opted the thinking and mixed it with popular meditation. Guru's jumped on the bandwagon and soon swamis and yogis were offering seminars and writing books teaching cancer patients how to meditate themselves right into perfect health by simply starting at the top of the "cancer chain" with happy

thoughts, which should result in a DECREASE of abnormal cell production. How this was supposed to destroy the existing cancer cells is not discussed, and few bothered to ask.

## THE REALITY

So what about material from respectable research work? Wally had to dig deep -- this side, as we in the skeptical community find all too often, does not get very good coverage. In all the best studies, one can guess the outcome when the variables are tightly controlled. The four best studies conducted, all published in the "Journal of the American Medical Association", found no significant correlation between one's state of mind and the incidence of or cure of cancer. The numbers just aren't there. In the largest group studied -- 1,000 patients -- there was no association whatever. The studies that showed the most significance were invariably those that used the fewest subjects and had the worst experimental controls.

Dr. Sampson began to realize something peculiar in some of the smaller, less-controlled professional journals: none of the competing researchers took each other to task. They were unusually nice to each other. This is uncharacteristic in the halls of scientific research. The scientific method itself invites sharp dissent from competing researchers on controversial matters.

Typically, when one researcher finds flaws in another's work he or she is only too happy to dig them out and publish a counter or a refutation. There appeared to be a buddy system working with the meditation-will-cure-you crowd, a kind of if-you-don't-knock-me-I-won't-knock-you gentleman's agreement. Normal science is combative. It is not for the weak-hearted.

## CONCLUSION

The real problem is the same one we, as skeptics, always face: reality versus belief, reason versus emotion. We have all had the experience of physical suffering from emotional stress. From that it is not hard to see how one can extrapolate from some physical manifestation like ulcers to cancer. When pop terminology like "natural," or "organic," are related to the whole process the emotional case is made all the stronger. And, after all, meditating is much more pleasant to contemplate than debilitating surgery and the powerful side effects of chemo- and radiation therapy.

Alas, positive thinking appears to be the laetrile of the 90s.

## CONSUMER ADVOCACY

by Shawn Carlson

Bay Area Skeptics is, among other things, a consumer advocacy group. We contend that people have the right to know that they are

getting the services for which they are paying, especial when those services, improperly applied, might endanger the public health.

Psychics and astrologers pander their secret "occult gifts" under the guise of psychological and life-guidance counseling. They offer counseling on all matters of their patients' lives. Since the advice occultists give often has profound effects on their clients' wellbeing we believe that all occult counselors should be considered health care professionals and held to the appropriate standards.

This means two things. First, that they obtain state certification in counseling. And second, that they be required to demonstrate that they really do possess the occult abilities which they often charge their patients large sums to perform. This second condition would require every occultist to pass a test of psychic skills (administered under controls that would preclude the possibility of cheating before they are permitted to run barefoot through their patients' troubles). Considering the enormous potential for harm that occult advice may bring, doesn't the protection of the public health demand that we hold occultists to the same reasonable standards to which we hold other counselors?

Astrologers and psychics alike have been given every opportunity to show that they can provide the services they advertise. They have been willingly tested numerous times at tasks that they agreed were fair tests of their powers, yet they have failed each time. We insist that all occultic counselors come out from behind their self-woven veils of mystery and be required to either step into the light of public scrutiny, or give up the business of public and self-deception.

**OF ALL THE PLACES!**

BAS secretary RICK MOEN has something to his credit few of us can enjoy. He was quoted in the "National Examiner", a weekly tabloid. No, Moen hasn't gone off the deep end with his new hollow-earth theory, and he didn't tell those folks about his recent UFO abduction experience.

There is a group in the Bay Area that calls themselves "Californians for Earthquake Prevention"; they believe a "massive build-up of sound waves caused by screeching car alarms and millions of pounding feet" caused the October 17 quake.

The last word in the article was given by Rick: "'These ideas are ludicrous,' said Rick Moen, a spokesman for Bay Area Skeptics, a scientific think-tank."

We are a scientific "think-tank" yet. We'll take that, thank you.

## GET READY!

For those of us who attended last year's BAS annual picnic, there is no need to elaborate. For the rest, we elaborate: it was fabulous. Ben and Carol Baumgartner have agreed to do it again this year but we told them we cannot have them provide the food. They said that about \$5 per person should be enough to cover expenses and they will do the rest (BYOD).

We will have the picnic in August, and we invite you to join us for a truly memorable repast. Notify us that you intend to come so we can begin to make some estimates of how many will be there. Last year we had four entr,es, three vegetable choices, three kinds of salad, and sumptuous desserts. The whole thing was capped off with door prizes and entertainment.

To get the ball rolling now, send a \$5 (or more if you want to help with expenses) check payable to BEN BAUMGARTNER at 2467 Betlo Ave., Mountain View, CA 94043. If you can help out please enclose a note to that effect. You can talk to Ben or Carol at (415) 968-1535.

## DEGREES OF FOLLY: PART XI

by William Bennetta

Parts I through X of this article ran in earlier issues of "BASIS", starting in February 1989. Here is a summary:

By law, no unaccredited school in California can issue degrees unless the school has been assessed and formally approved by the superintendent of public instruction -- the chief of the State Department of Education.

In August 1988, the Department's Private Postsecondary Education Division (PPED) staged an assessment of the ICR Graduate School (ICRGS). The ICRGS is an arm of the Institute for Creation Research, a fundamentalist ministry that promotes the religious pseudoscience called "creation-science."

The founder and president of the ICR is Henry Morris, a preacher and former engineer who poses as an expert in geology, biology, paleontology and various other fields in which he has no detectable credentials. The Department's assessment of Morris's school was made by a five-man committee that had been chosen by, and was managed by, a PPED officer named Roy W. Steeves.

The committee's report was bogus: It hid the real nature of the ICR, promoted the ICR's scientific pretensions, and said that the superintendent of public instruction, Bill Honig, should approve the ICR as a source of masters' degrees in science and in science education.

Two of the committee's members then sent separate reports to Honig, telling the truth about the ICR. But Roy Steeves, in memoranda to the PPED's director, Joseph P. Barankin, endorsed the ICR and urged that it should be approved.

Honig, in statements given to the press in December 1988, refused the approval; but in January 1989 the Department drew back from that decision and began to negotiate with the ICR. In those negotiations, the ICR was represented by Wendell R. Bird, a lawyer from Atlanta. On 3 March, Bird and Joseph Barankin reached an agreement. The ICR would purge "ICRGS's interpretations" from courses that would count toward degrees. To learn whether the ICR had made the revisions, the Department would send a new committee; one member would be chosen by the ICR.

Despite the agreement, the ICR continued to advertise the ICRGS as a "Graduate School of Creationist Science," devoted to "scientific and Biblical creationism."

The new committee examined the ICR in August 1989. It was managed not by Steeves but by Jeanne Bird. Bird had joined the PPED in the spring of 1989 and had become an assistant director a few months later. Four of the committee's five members were scientists from campuses of the University of California or the California State University. The fifth, Leroy Eimers, came from Cedarville College, a Bible college in Ohio. He was the member who had been chosen by the ICR, in accordance with the agreement reached in March.

After the committee's visit, Henry Morris and the other ICR men feared that the committee would declare the ICRGS to be defective and unworthy of approval, and that Honig would follow the committee's judgment. On 31 August, in an effort to win sympathy from the press and the public, the ICR men held a "news conference" to denounce Honig and to distribute a fiercely misleading account of their transactions with his Department.

The committee's report was submitted on 12 January 1990. As a whole, it was candid, precise and rich in examples showing the bases for the committee's conclusions: The ICR, despite its name, was not a scientific institution and did not offer proper education in science. But the last paragraph of the report was vapid fluff: It said that Leroy Eimers had not agreed with many conclusions drawn in the report, but it did not suggest that he had any evidence to support his position, or that he had tried to challenge even one of the detailed findings that the report set forth.

Five days later, on 17 January, the ICR men -- saying that they had not yet seen the report -- issued another "news release" to denounce Honig and his Department.

In March, as I shall tell here, the Department formally refused to reapprove the ICRGS as a source of masters' degrees in science and in science education. -- W.B., 10 May

## THE COUNCIL CONCURS

When the superintendent of public instruction intends to deny reapproval of a degree-granting school, he first must notify, and obtain advice from, the state's Council for Private Postsecondary Educational Institutions. On 13 March, after examining the record of the ICR case, the Council's Review Committee recommended that the full Council should affirm Bill Honig's intention to deny reapproval to the ICR. Later on the same day, the full Council did so.

On 16 March the Department's general counsel, Joseph R. Symkowitz, sent a letter (signed by Gregory J. Roussere, one of Symkowitz's staff lawyers) to Henry Morris. Here, with some minor typographic changes, is the letter's full text:

Dear Dr. Morris:

Re: Final notice of denial of authorization to operate under Education Code Section 94310.2

Following the hearing before the Review Committee, the Council for Private Postsecondary Education[al] Institutions, on March 13, 1990, advised the Private Postsecondary Education Division (PPED) of the State Department of Education to proceed with its proposed denial action against your institution.

This letter represents the Department's Final Notice that the application filed by the Institute for Creation Research for authorization to operate under Education Code Section 94310.2 is denied. Denial is for the reasons stated in the visiting committee's final report, a copy of which was sent to you previously.

You may appeal this denial to the Superintendent of Public Instruction in accordance with the regulation procedures described in Section 18827 of Title 5, California Code of Regulations. A copy of that section is attached. If a timely appeal is filed, the matter will be heard by an independent hearing officer pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act, the details of which would be explained later. In order to expedite the appeal, your letter may be sent to me AND a copy to Jeanne Bird, Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction and Director, at the Private Postsecondary Education Division.

## A CURIOUS TACTIC

The ICR did indeed issue a notice of appeal, including a request that the pertinent hearing be held in San Diego County. The notice was filed with the Department on 13 April by Loren E. McMaster, a lawyer from Sacramento.

On the same day, the ICR sought to institute a lawsuit by filing a complaint in the United States District Court in Los Angeles. The lawyers representing the ICR in that action were Wendell Bird, David J. Myers (a partner in Bird's law firm in Atlanta), Thomas T. Anderson (see "Creationists Issue a Phony Schoolbook," in "BASIS" for April 1990), and Loren McMaster.

The filing of the lawsuit was a curious tactic, because the ICR had not (and still has not) exhausted the appeal process by which it might obtain redress of its alleged grievances. By that standard, the lawsuit seems premature. Perhaps the ICR is merely trying to intimidate the Department; perhaps the ICR does not really expect the federal court to entertain such a suit while administrative remedies remain available.

The complaint names Bill Honig, Joseph Barankin, Jeanne Bird and the Department as defendants. It alleges that those defendants, in their "revocation" of the ICRGS's approval to grant degrees in science, have violated the ICR's rights to (among other things) academic freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, due process and equal protection, as established by the federal Constitution. It asks the court to declare that the defendants' actions were unconstitutional, and to enjoin the defendants from denying approval to the ICRGS; as an alternative to the injunction, it asks for damages that will compensate the ICR for "lost investment in establishing and operating the [ICRGS]" and for other losses.

The text of the complaint, purporting to set forth many facts of the ICR case, is predictably absurd. It begins by misrepresenting the case's central issue, which is that the ICR wants to award degrees and does NOT, as the complaint falsely suggests, merely want to "teach science courses in peace and without government interference. . . ." After that, it just gets worse. It even suggests that "science" has something to do with, or can be legitimated by, popular culture -- "the view of a majority of the American public."

In short, the complaint retails a lot of the ICR's customary nonsense. This includes a badly misleading account of the ICR case itself, comparable to the accounts that (as my readers will recall) the ICR has been giving to the press.

## THE BROTHEL BROCHURE

The ICR men evidently alerted the press to the filing of the complaint on 13 April, because the "Los Angeles Times" carried a story about it, written by Amy Wallace, on the following morning. The ICR's spokesman was Henry Morris's son John, who seemed not to care anymore about the ICR's "scientific" pretensions. He said explicitly that the ICR was teaching "Christian doctrine"; then he made a charming excursion into the subject of homosexual brothels. Here are some excerpts from Wallace's story:

"If the state can tell a private Christian school that they can't teach Christian doctrine, then the state has too much power," said John Morris, administrative vice president of the institute. "We're not asking the state to rule that creationism is the valid scientific interpretation, and we're not asking for inclusion of creationism in the public schools. We are asking for freedom of speech."

Morris and others allege that [Bill] Honig's aim is to shut down the institute, which has granted about 20 master's degrees in biology, geology, physics and science education since 1981.

But William L. Rukeyser, special assistant to Honig, disputed that.

"ICR's continued existence is not at question. Nobody is trying to shut down ICR," said Rukeyser.

"But we cannot legally describe ICR's current curriculum as qualifying for a master's of science degree. . . . If they wish to grant master's of creationism degrees, that would be fine with [Honig]. If they want to describe it as a degree in a system of beliefs, that would be fine.

"What is at question is essentially truth in advertising. . . ."

Morris said endorsement [of the ICR's beliefs by the Department] is not the issue: "There are approved by Mr. Honig's office homosexual brothels that teach homosexual technique. Do they endorse that? The brochure is full of nude men doing things to each other. So hopefully we're not talking about endorsement here."

Rukeyser retorted: "Does he claim that any of those institutions are claiming to offer master's of science degrees? I don't think so."

At this writing, on 10 May, no date has been chosen for the ICR's - administrative appeal, nor has the Department responded to the ICR's complaint in the federal court. The Department has asked the court to extend, until 22 May, the deadline for filing an answer.

## THINK POSITIVELY

Before proving that psychotherapy lengthened the lives of advanced breast-cancer patients, psychologist David Spiegel of Stanford had a strong prejudice against health-care providers he calls the "wish-away-your-cancer crowd."

"False hopes are raised," Spiegel complains. He still has little tolerance for those who encourage the gravely ill to engage in "visualization" and other mental exercises leading patients to believe they should be able to destroy killer cells by thinking positively.

But the difference now is that Spiegel, too, is convinced that a purely mental activity -- participation in group therapy -- not only improves the quality of remaining life, but prolongs it.

In an unprecedented study of 86 Santa Clara Valley women with metastatic breast cancer reported in the British medical journal "Lancet" Spiegel and co-researchers at Stanford and UC-Berkeley showed that a year of group therapy and instruction in pain control added a year and a half of life.

"We didn't make cancer go away. We extended survival," Spiegel said. "The fact that you can do something with people who have a terminal illness that increases life and that is clinically as well as statistically significant means we have a robust effect here well worth looking at further."

Spiegel believes survival was extended because therapy curbed patients' depression, allowing them to follow the best diets and to comply better with medical treatments.

"It's possible," he added, "that there was some enhancement of immune function." [Note: see the summary of Wallace Sampson's address to BAS in the May issue of "BASIS". -- Ed.]

Dr. Sandra Levy, a specialist in behavioral immunology at the University of Pittsburgh, said the study was the best thus far to have shown "fairly indisputably" that psychosocial intervention helped cancer patients.

Levy has examined links between behavior and immune function in people with cancer in its early stages. She suspected that participants in Spiegel's study lived longer because therapy had a positive physiological effect even relatively late in the course of the disease.

Ronald Glaser, Ohio State University psychoimmunologist, speaking for himself and co-researcher Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, said:

"Along with other studies, this study is consistent with the hypothesis that what can [have an] impact [on] the central nervous system can have implications for disease. If it's stress, it's negative. But if there's something else that makes the system react other ways, it might have a positive effect."

Berkeley psychologist Neal Fiore, a former cancer patient himself and the author of "The Road Back to Health", said Spiegel's work

was especially important because it countered bogus New Age theories holding cancer patients responsible, somehow, for their disease. Spiegel's study showed that improved health "has nothing to do with previous attitude of character," Fiore emphasized.

"What the paper does," said Tom Coates, chief of UC-San Francisco's Behavioral Medicine, "is give hope."

The study also was praised in "Science", the publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, by Boston University Psychologist Bernard Fox, a critic of psychosocial treatments, and Jimmie Holland, chief of psychiatry at New York's Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. Holland's praise was presented with the caveat that psychotherapy not be viewed now as a substitute for standard treatments.

Spiegel originally set out to disprove the idea that non-medical treatments could help cancer patients.

In 1976, Spiegel and Stanford psychologist Irv Yalom -- author of the critically acclaimed new book, "Love's Executioner and Other Tales of Psychotherapy" -- tried to determine how those destined to die from cancer could be made to feel better in the time left.

The 86 women in the initial study generally were upper middle-class and well-educated; they averaged 55 years of age. Fifty were selected at random to participate in weekly 90-minute group therapy sessions with eight to ten patients and two therapists; the remainder, like the fifty in therapy, received only standard medical care.

The 86 were also given a battery of tests at four-month intervals to assess moods, coping styles, family environments, degrees of pain and phobic responses, (if any) to their conditions. By year's end, Spiegel said, the treatment group had half the pain of the control group, less mood disturbance, fewer phobic reactions and fewer maladaptive coping behaviors.

"We helped them face their years of dying," Spiegel said. "One woman said, 'Talking about dying in the group is a bit like looking into the Grand Canyon. I know that if I fell in, it would be the end. But I feel better about myself because I can look.'"

## SURPRISE FINDINGS

Several years ago, however, Spiegel, having grown extremely irritated by the "wish-away-your-cancer crowd," resolved to rebut its claims. He remembered, with anger, patients who had been counseled that the "right mental attitude" might enable them to quit chemotherapy, and others led to believe they were at fault for the spread of their disease.

"I thought, 'I have the perfect negative study. I have a patient population we know we helped psychologically. If we can show

there's no difference in survival time, that well really put this to rest," he said. With a grant from the American Cancer Research Fund, Spiegel obtained data on the 86 women in the original study group. It came as no surprise that all but three had died. But Spiegel said he was shocked to discover that women in the treatment group had lived 18 months longer, on average, than women in the control group.

With a Sanford biostatistician, Spiegel spent three years analyzing the data. Variables such as medical treatment, age and length of time from diagnosis to metastasis were examined closely.

"We simply could not find any differences that would make the finding go away." he said.

## EDITOR'S CORNER

It is wonderful to be found wrong in something. When an honest person discovers error in his or her thinking, he or she can only be happy to jettison some cumbersome baggage. Mainstream science unceremoniously throws discredited hypotheses on the trash heap of tried-and-failed ideas. Progress in science comes through discovery and correction of error, and there are great incentives to find mistakes. One could easily say that the goal of science is the search to root out error more than it is the search for truth. In this way, progress is automatically truth-converging. When there are fakes and frauds, there is every reason and effort to excise them from the scientific body to eliminate the infection.

## PSEUDOSCIENCE CONTRAST

Contrast this when one discovers error in the closet of pseudoscience and committed believers. The reaction is vastly different. For them it is not just a simple matter of expunging wrong. Error is a disaster, a crisis, so there is a powerful disincentive to pry.

Even minor error is a crack in the dike. Pseudoscientists hide their fakes and frauds for fear of casting doubt on the body. Screwball notions from anyone, trained or not, can flash into prominence if there is the least hint that the idea might give support to the party line. If critical evaluation exists at all, the body usually suppresses it from within.

Such are the dangers of committed dogma -- it must be flawless. Acknowledgement of even the tiniest scratch bodes evil for the whole edifice. Mistakes are far more than losing face -- they could mean the loss of identity, so every form of protectionism emerges, most notably denial and cognitive dissonance all the way to complete withdrawal.

## AN EXAMPLE

In issue XXV of "Creation/Evolution", a journal devoted exclusively to study of the creation-evolution controversy, a classic example of this inability to acknowledge error was illustrated in the form of a response by Norman Geisler to a previous article. The question of the debate turned about a quote: "It is bigotry for the public schools to teach only one theory of origins." attributed to Clarence Darrow from the Scopes trial. A skeptical Tom McIver first saw the quote in creationist literature and decided to look into it. He got the transcript of the trial and found that there was no such quote, so he wrote about his findings in edition XXIV of "C/E".

Geisler, the director of Liberty Center for Research and Scholarship at Liberty University (Jerry Falwell's school), a frequent correspondent in the pages of "C/E", then wrote to "explain" the origin of the misquote: "Wendel Bird [chief attorney for the creationists in their Supreme-Court bid requiring creationism to be taught in the schools], whose "Yale Law Review" article (1978) was the source of many of the citations, has subsequently recognized that the quote is probably not authentic. So much for trusting Ivy League publications!"

The cognitive dissonance flows, even erupts, from the very print on the pages of Geisler's reply. McIver exposed a clear, unequivocal error, but do we get an equally clear, unequivocal retraction? Of course not, we get a "probably not authentic." Worse, Mr. Geisler prepares us for round II of this circus when he and his comrades will use McIver's revelation to turn and kick us in the behind. Look carefully: Geisler cites Wendell Bird's "Yale Law Review" article as the source for the false quotation and then says, astonishingly, "So much for trusting Ivy League publications!"

Wendell Bird's derelict scholarship is not to be questioned. "Yale's" credibility is suspect. Yale's cancer metastasizes at light speed and immediately consumes Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Princeton, Dartmouth and Harvard so that we can no longer trust any of their communications, either. Alums, pull your card to save yourselves. Say, didn't Stephen Gould have something to do with Harvard? Since we already know Harvard to be a den of humanist snakes, this is only further confirmation that we cannot give any credence to anything coming from there.

The cognitive dissonance and denial continued in Geisler's response as he stated that though the quotation "probably is not correct," Darrow did, after all, use the word bigotry. Presumably Geisler wants us to believe that it is not without good reason that Darrow MIGHT have said such a thing or possibly intimated as much.

A similar incident happened recently at the Paluxy river in Texas. Creationists, notably a man named Glen Baugh, claimed they had found dinosaur prints alongside human footprints in the same strata, thus falsifying evolution (this, while saying out the other side of their mouths that evolution is not scientific because it is

not falsifiable).

Glen Kuban and a crew of knowledgeable researchers spent about a year (in 1988) working at the Paluxy banks and produced proof that the "mantracks" were misidentified prints of a small, three-toed dinosaur. (See issue XII for the story.) Creationists are still mucking around in the Paluxy mire trying to find Fred Flintstone's tracks alongside those of his pets. There has been no clear, unequivocal renunciation of Baugh's slapstick farce in spite of the staring, knock-down evidence that demands it.

## THE CREATIONIST THREAT

What the man on the street does not understand is that the creationists are a very dangerous lot. They have an agenda, are well financed, and have political clout far beyond their numbers. They have learned that they cannot make their way by the ordinary scientific processes of hard research and presentation of evidence subject to peer review, so they grab the lapels of the executive, legislative and judicial branches and shake out concessions to which they are not entitled.

The creationists have shown us they are not above the most unscrupulous tactics including, but not limited to, lying, cheating, and manipulation. The flagellant fruitcakes in Iran chanting "Allah is great" are only a step in degree from some fundamentalist fanatics among the scientific creationists. [The journal "Creation/Evolution" is available at P.O. Box 146, Amherst, NY 14226. The cost is \$12 for four issues. It is not published on a particular schedule.]

"The more unnatural anything is, the more it is capable of becoming the object of dismal admiration." -- Thomas Paine

## RINGMASTER EXPOSES RING LEADERS OF SPIRITUAL FRAUD

by Austin Miles

Austin Miles is the author of "Don't Call Me Brother", a book about his experiences as a former Pentecostal pastor with the PTL ministry. Miles is an internationally famous circus ringmaster, his profession before the PTL. He will show how a bunch of con-men exploited the faith of millions of people to get millions upon millions of dollars from them.

The PTL took advantage of laws designed to protect the freedom of worship. The responsible individuals were accountable to no one. They built a huge machinery of lobby groups and tax dodges to enrich themselves at the expense of the elderly, the poor and the genuinely pious.

Mr. Miles will expose the internal workings of such fund raising schemes as nonexistent "financial crises", telethons and a level of immorality that makes an honest preacher blush.

Come and hear this first-hand report from a man who traveled in the inner circles of the PTL Club and who watched Jim Bakker's corruption grow as the cash flowed in.

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## CALENDAR

June Meeting

**LIVE AT THE PTL**

by Austin Miles

Tuesday, June 26th, 7:30pm, El Cerrito Public Library

The El Cerrito Public Library is at 6510 Stockton Ave. From Route 80, take the Central Ave. exit (the third exit north of University Ave.). Go east about three blocks and turn left on San Pablo Ave., continue three blocks and turn right on Stockton. The library is on the right in the third block.

Watch for coming events in the BAS CALENDAR, or call 415-LA-TRUTH for up-to-the-minute details on events. If you have ideas about topics or speakers, leave a message on the hotline.

**WARNING: WE STRONGLY URGE** that you call the hotline shortly before attending any Calendar activity to see if there have been any changes.

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Opinions expressed in "BASIS" are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of BAS, its board or its advisors.

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